

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-5, and 7-14 are pending in the present application.

Claim 1 and 5 have been amended to incorporate the specific features of the attenuation of the visual noticeability of overlaps between adjacent plotted areas, as recited in claims 2 and 6, respectively. Claims 2 and 6 have been cancelled. Claims 11-13 have been amended to be consistent with claim 1 or claim 5. No new matter has been added, and Applicant respectfully requests that the amendment to the claims be entered.

Applicant thanks Examiner Abraham and Examiner Tucker for the telephonic interview (Interview) conducted with the undersigned on Feb. 2, 2010. Certain aspects of the Interview will be discussed below, where appropriate.

Claims 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 14, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Japanese Patent Application Publication No. JP 03-281329 (Kihara) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,500,378 (Smith). Claims 2, 6, and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Kihara in view of Smith and in further view of European Patent Application No. EP 1192041 B1 (Pollack). Claims 3-4 and 7-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Kihara in view of Smith and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 6,461,797 (Lercel). Claims 9, 12, and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over combinations of one or more of Kihara, Smith, U.S. Patent No. 3,718,396 (Hennings), U.S. Pre-Grant Publication No. 2002/0149137 (Jang), and U.S. Patent No. 6,264,873 (Gigl). Claims 2 and 6 have been cancelled, making their rejection moot. Applicant respectfully but strenuously traverses the rejection of claims 1, 3-5, and 7-14 for the reasons set forth below.

Claim 1 recites that a planar plotting mask is moved over plotted areas such that overlaps are formed between adjacent ones of the plotted areas, and that a computer is utilized to generate mask images to attenuate a visual noticeability of the overlaps. During the Interview, the Examiner contended that Kihara inherently has an overlap of exposure and an attenuation of the visual noticeability of the overlaps. Specifically, the Examiner's position is that the movement of the mask in Kihara results in areas of the resin to be cured being exposed to different portions

of the mask at different times, resulting in repeated overlapping radiation of those areas. The Examiner also contended that the attenuation would inherently occur in Kihara.

However, during the Interview, the Examiner agreed that the particular features of how the attenuation is conducted were not disclosed in Kihara. Accordingly, those particular features have been added to claim 1 from claim 2 (and to claim 5 from claim 6). Although claim 2 was also rejected in the Office Action, during the interview it was agreed that in the present context, the previous rejection of claim 2 would likely not apply. Furthermore, if Kihara is inherently causing overlaps and attenuation thereof, there would have been no need for one of ordinary skill in the art to modify Kihara in view of Smith and/or Pollack to attenuate the overlaps. As such, claim 1 is patentable over Kihara in view of Smith and Pollack. Additionally, the remarks of the Amendment filed December 31, 2010 are incorporated by reference herein, since they provide additional arguments against the combination of Kihara and Smith.

The Office Action rejects claim 2 as obvious over Kihara in view of Smith and further in view of Pollack. In particular, the Examiner contends at page 9 of the Office Action that Pollack teaches adjusting light intensity and resolution to obtain the highest pattern resolution and that it would have been obvious to control the intensity of adjacent boundary areas to result in an improved boundary definition and make the boundary line unnoticeable. However, if Kihara is inherently attenuating the visual noticeability of the overlaps, manipulation of intensity and resolution is not necessary, and would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art. If the Examiner's interpretation of the disclosure of Kihara is correct, the problem that is addressed by the claimed invention is absent in Kihara and there is no need to address it in view of Smith and/or Pollack.

Moreover, there is no disclosure in Pollack that obtaining the highest pattern definitions results in an attenuation of the visual noticeability of the overlaps. In fact, a higher pattern definition may result in the enhancement of the visual noticeability of overlaps. Additionally, the specific features of how the attenuation of the visual noticeability of the overlaps occurs, as recited in claim 1, is not disclosed or suggested in Kihara, Smith, or Pollack. Just because

Pollack may disclose adjusting intensity does not mean that it is adjusted in the same way as recited in claim 1. The disclosures of Lercel, Hennings, Jang, and Gigl fail to cure the deficiencies explained above regarding claim 1.

In view of the above, claim 1 is patentable over Kihara in view of Smith and Pollack. Claim 5 is patentable for the same reasons as claim 1. Claims 3-4 and 7-14 depend from claim 1 or claim 5 and are therefore patentable at least for the reason that they depend from a patentable base claim. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the obviousness rejection of claims 1, 3-5, and 7-14 are respectfully solicited.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing Amendments and Remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that the claims distinguish over the cited art. Therefore, the present application is in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and an early Notice of Allowance are respectfully requested.

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